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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 5630
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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 6788
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3883
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 4173
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5712
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6502
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 1236
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHINGTON DC
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SUBJECT: BOLIVIAN FIRMS COMMIT TO ERADICATE CHILD LABOR

¶1. (U) At an August conference organized by the Bolivian Institute for External Commerce (IBCE), the private sector made public its efforts to eradicate child labor and adopt corporate social responsibility measures. Bringing together members from the private sector (agricultural, industrial, forest and manufacturing), the Vice Ministry of Medium and Large Enterprise and Industries, the Bolivian Institute of Normalization and Quality (IBNORCA), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), IBCE proposed the idea of a social certification &Free of Child Labor to companies that commit to preventing and eradicating child labor in Bolivia.

¶2. (U) This IBCE initiative is unique as it originated in the private sector. In March 2008, IBNORCA set up a Technical Committee called &Personal Protection) Free of Child Labor to develop a &Free of Child Labor norm.

Initially, four businesses are participating and working to get more on board. The goals of this norm are to eradicate child labor, to respect and value children's rights, to increase the competitive advantage of Bolivian products in the global market, and to contribute in Bolivia's compliance with relevant international conventions. Vice Minister of Medium and Large Enterprises and Industries Mario Molina recognizes that this initiative represents a &big step as it includes ethics in business. This norm is the first of three; the other two will be &Free of Discrimination and &Free of Forced Labor.

¶3. (U) The &Free of Child Labor norm seeks to incorporate changing global characteristics. Bolivian companies recognize that in order to become more globally competitive, they need to be more socially responsible by doing their part in preventing child labor. According to UNICEF, 10% of Bolivian children between age 7 and 13 are working out of economic necessity; the majority of them is exploited by employers and is not attending school. Adopting the norm is done on a voluntary basis and companies are required to respect codes of conducts that are specific to their sector.

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